

THE
***Final
Straw***
A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

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The Final Straw Radio
PO Box 6004
Asheville, NC 28816
USA

Email us at:

thefinalstrawradio@riseup.net
or **thefinalstrawradio@protonmail.com**

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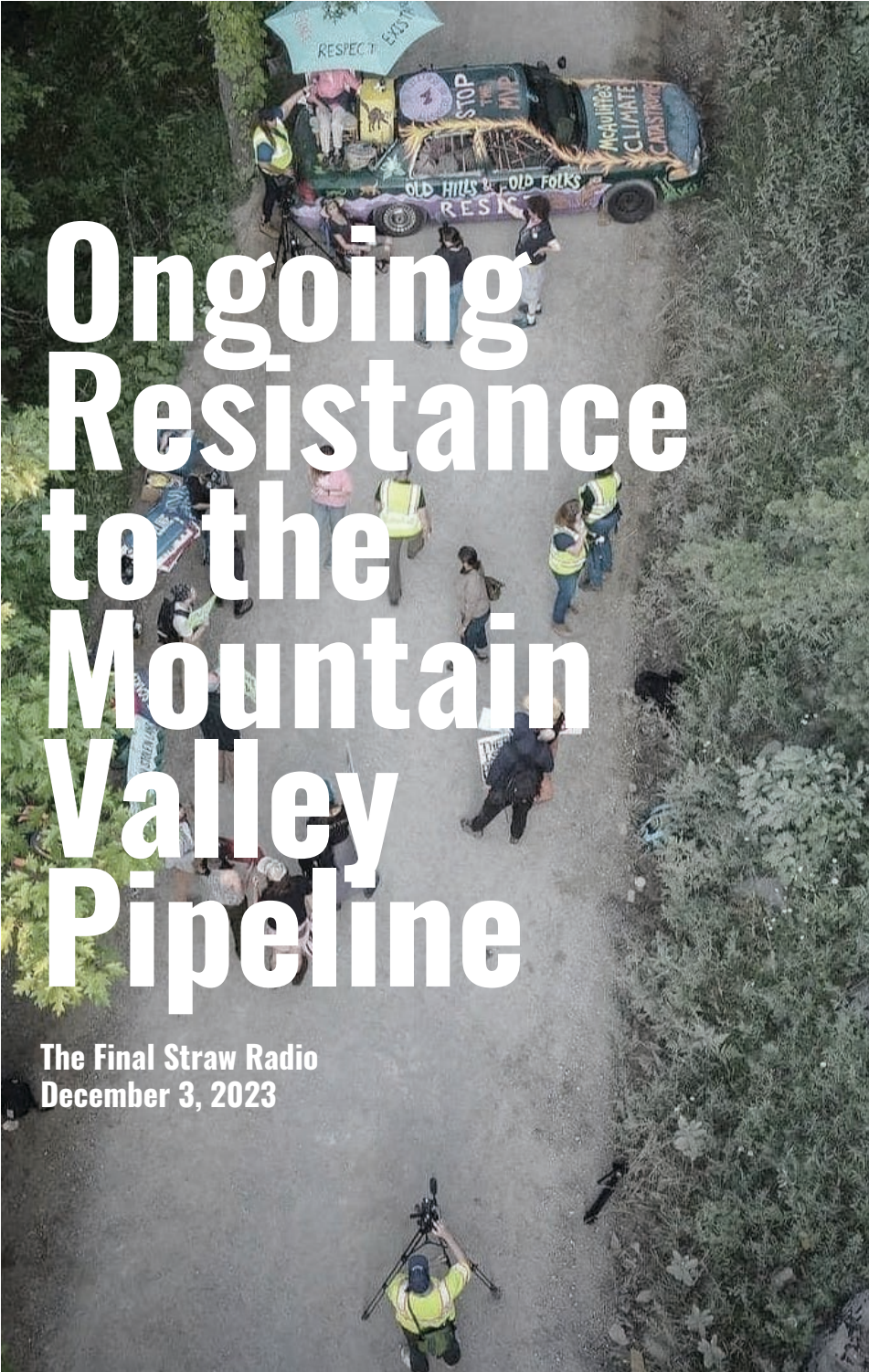
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An aerial photograph of a protest on a dirt road. A car is decorated with various signs, including 'STOP THE MIP', 'McQUINN'S CLIMATE CRASHING', and 'OLD HILLS & OLD FOLKS RESIST'. Protesters are standing around the car, some holding signs. A person in a yellow vest is visible in the foreground, and another person is visible in the background. The road is surrounded by dense green foliage.

Ongoing Resistance to the Mountain Valley Pipeline

The Final Straw Radio
December 3, 2023

This week, we checked back in with folks involved in the struggle to block the Mountain Valley Pipeline, a 303 mile so-called natural gas pipeline proposed to bring fracked gas from the Marcellus and Utica shale formations across parts of West Virginia and Virginia with an extension into North Carolina.

Since a chat with activists we had in July, there have been nearly weekly actions to block the expansion of the pipeline across waterways and cursed terrain, endangering water tables and ecosystems around central Appalachia. We talk about this proposed project, the damage that's been done and continues to be spread, the increasing belligerence of the men employed in the destruction and the ramping up legal repression facing activists and community members.

You can learn more by checking out **StopMVP.org** or follow the social media accounts **AppalachiansAgainstPipelines** or **POWHR**. Support of the movement can also be offered up at Appalachian Legal Support Fund. And you can find out about companies involved in the MVP here.

Check out our past interviews about the MVP on the Final Straw's website at: <https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/> where you can also find links to further resources on this topic, featured music, the audio version, and files for printing copies of this episode.

there's that. For sure.

Mountain: There needs to be a "Is Henry Kissinger still dead?" Twitter account now.

TFSR: I think he lived 79 years too long, personally. I feel that it's a failure that he died in some degree of comfort without facing any material retribution for all the lives... Somebody did the math. I think they did some post where they calculated that he lived 34,000 days or something like that and the amount of people that died during the Vietnam War and figured out that 10 people had died for every day that he was alive. If they were to pin all the deaths on him. Pretty terrible.

Mountain: Oh, that's how he stayed alive. Wow.

Blair: Yeah, and that's just Vietnam too. Kissinger had his finger in all sorts of things. I don't know if this is true, but I think I read that he like couldn't go to Chile because there were warrants for his arrest.

Mountain: I think so. I think in the post-Pinochet years, he was tried in absentia and found guilty.

Blair: Abolish Warrants, except for Henry Kissinger. [laughs]

Mountain: Deliver a warrant to his grave. [laughs]

Blair: He can finally serve that warrant for real.

TFSR: That warrant being in the form of a water buffalo full of piss.

Mountain: New gender-neutral bathroom just dropped. [laughs]

Blair: I mean, Margaret Thatcher's grave is arguably the first gender neutral bathroom.

vironmental Regulatory Courts) were trying to stop the process of the expansion of the pipeline through the legal routes. It's moot at this point. But there seems like there's probably still a need for legal defense for the folks that are catching all these charges. For folks that are in the region that haven't gotten involved, or folks that are from outside the region and want to get involved, I wonder if you could you talk a little bit about what's needed around legal, around fundraising, around education, or boots on the ground.

Mountain: So, one avenue of support that people can provide is the Appalachian Legal Defense Fund, which goes to people directly on the ground to cover legal costs and legal expenses. So that's a good organization that we work with.

Blair: I also think, to answer the previous question a little more. If folks are in the region, or are coming through the region, and are looking to be involved, there's a lot of different community organizations that pretty frequently host events that range from protests to art builds and community building spaces and education workshops to learn about the struggle here. Some of those, for example, POWHR, a community organization that does a lot of anti-Mountain Valley Pipeline work. You can find them on social media. You can also follow the Appalachians Against Pipelines social media. It posts a lot about needs for the campaign against the pipeline and ways that people can plug in.

Then also, if you just look around in the news, I think there's pretty frequent call outs and links to other community groups that can frequently use support, whether that is bringing some food by, or donating some money, or actually coming and being boots on the ground to support the campaign it's all really, really valuable. All right, I'm done.

TFSR: Yeah, that was the spin that I was going to suggest. Mountain and Blair, thank you so much for having this conversation, and for the work that you do. Yeah, let's keep in touch.

Mountain: Yeah, this is great. Thanks so much for having us.

Blair: Yeah, thanks for the chat.

TFSR: Was there anything that I didn't ask about that you want to say, that you want to respond to or deal with?

Mountain: Henry Kissinger is dead, and that's really great.

Blair: Henry Kissinger is dead. I woke up this morning and Henry Kissinger was still dead. I kind of assumed that maybe he would crawl out of the grave and zombie walk over to coup a democratically-elected leader or something, but still dead. So,

TFSR: So, I wonder if y'all would please introduce yourself with whatever names, preferred pronouns for this conversation, any location information, whatever you think is important for listeners to know.

Mountain: Yeah, I'll go first. My name is Mountain. I use She/They pronouns, and I'm currently in central Virginia in occupied Monacan territory.

Blair: My name is Blair. I you She or They pronouns, I currently live in Central Appalachia on occupied Tupelo/Monacan Land, and I grew up here along the path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline.

TFSR: Thanks a lot, to both of you for making the time to have this chat happen. So, a lot of listeners will have heard about the MVP for all sorts of reasons—partially because they're good people, but also because we've had a bunch of interviews over the years about the MVP, including back in August of this year. So, I'm just going to reintroduce the subject for those listeners who maybe who haven't heard of it. From the StopMVP.org website: "The Mountain Valley Pipeline or MVP Project is an incomplete underground 42-inch fracked gas transmission pipeline project that is steamrolling its way over life-giving water and land across 303 miles from northern West Virginia to Southern Virginia. The MVP's proposed 72 miles south gate extension and its Lambert compressor station, target communities in Virginia and North Carolina. Entering its ninth year of resistance, our diverse movement of landowners, indigenous water protectors, Black community leaders, and climate activists is so close to stopping this fossil fuel pipe pipeline."

In 2022, West Virginia Democrat Senator Joe Manchin released the hostage that was the inflation Reduction Act in exchange for lifting of regulatory barriers related to the environmental impacts of the MVP to fast track the MVP and get the Marcellus and Utica Shale fracked natural gas flowing. This restarted the project after it was blocked at multiple points by regulatory blocks as well as direct actions. But the regulatory blocks stood in State and Federal environmental departments citing dangers to water and local environments along the route. As of August 2023, because of this action concerning Manchin's request the federal courts have declared that they don't have jurisdiction to intercede in blocking the construction.

We last checked in in July with Crystal and Rose from the movement to stop the construction, as both the construction and the direct actions to shut down the work sites for the MVP had started back up. I wonder if Mountain and Blair, (or Blair Mountain), if you could set the stage by updating us since July with some of the direct actions that folks should know about.

Blair: Yeah, absolutely. I think that since July there has been some of the most

intense series of direct actions that have taken place in this really long campaign, which is pretty notable, because like you mentioned earlier this has been a very long land defense campaign. We have seen a huge variety of different people taking direct action in Central Appalachia to stop the pipeline.

There was one instance when three community elders—grandmothers—locked themselves to rocking chairs and blocked access of a NBP drill site, while at the same time at that same drill site a PhD climate scientist and an 80-year-old woman locked themselves down to the actual drill that was drilling underneath the Greenbrier River, which is one of the last undammed rivers in the United States.

We have seen other people locking themselves to sleeping dragons on various mountains in Virginia and West Virginia. There was even a mass mobilization of folks on top of Peters Mountain in October, when a large number of people walked on to an MVP worksite in Jefferson National Forest in West Virginia.

Mountain: It's also important to know that recently MVP just did a hydrostatic test on the upper part of the pipe that's already been completed in the northern West Virginia area, and it failed the hydrostatic pressure test. So, it burst. I think it's important to note that the mountains themselves—not me, but the mountains themselves—are resisting this pipeline. It's an incredibly dangerous project, and people have been putting themselves on the line, but also the environment itself is not working well with them. So, we have a lot to owe the mountains.

TFSR: To get a little clarification on a few things, we talked in the last chat about how pipes have just been sitting out in all weather and not actually been covered from the elements, so the inside of them, whatever lining was in there, probably was getting damaged by the water from rain and being out in the elements. I was wondering if that's that or some other element. Then the other question is, what is a sleeping dragon, for folks that don't know?

Blair: Yeah, so a sleeping dragon is, to answer that question first, essentially a hole in the ground that has been fitted with a buried lockbox that allows a protester to essentially collaborate with the mountains themselves and lock themselves to a mountain and usually prevent construction in the path of the pipeline.

To answer your question about the pipes, and to elaborate a little more on what Mountain was saying, is that we have seen widely reported instances by local community members and community action groups of pipes that have been sitting out for years at a time through the elements. Central Appalachia is not a hospitable place to have things sitting out. We have harsh winters, hot summers, lots of rain, lots of snow, sleet, ice, fog around the clock. So, folks are really beginning to wonder what's going to happen once these pipes are in the ground and they have to start doing these tests because it appears that Mountain Valley Pipeline is trying to cut even more expense by not going back and replacing the things that have gone bad since construction initially started.

I think that while this is definitely an environmental issue, it's also important to touch on the fact that extractive, violent industries like this often serve as a bellwether for what we allow to happen to our communities without resistance if we choose not to resist them.

For a long time, I think Appalachia has been a sacrifice zone for this country. It's one sacrifice zone among many in this nation. If we begin to allow things like this to happen unopposed and uncontested, then we set the stage for **** to get much worse. Not just environmentally, as climate change continues to progress, but also throughout that whole network of things that are connected. Because the violence that we allow against the land, allows violence against each other, from the state and from repressive forces. So, we gotta challenge that all places where we see it.

This pipeline fight for folks in these communities has not just been a source of environmental resistance, it's also been a source of really great joy. The networks created to fight this pipeline, have also been the same network that responded really successfully with mutual aid during the COVID pandemic and have created safe spaces for a lot of queer and trans and other marginalized Appalachians and people that live in these communities that otherwise wouldn't have had them. So, I think it is important to realize that, especially as this fight has gone on for so long, it has become so much more than just land defense or an environmental campaign. It has become a source of community that has, in my opinion, saved people's lives and kept them connected to one another at a time when folks are really trying to rip them apart.

Mountain: I think that's a big part of what has both drawn me into this campaign and kept me engaged is that we're not a single-issue environmental movement here. From the beginning, we've made that clear. We've talked about prisons, we've talked about policing, recently we've made solidarity statements with Palestine. I think, like Blair was saying, it's this broader community that we're building here, not just around this pipeline project, but around all the interlocking oppressions that keep us bound together and keep our liberation bound together, that we're only going to be as free as the next person. We can only liberate ourselves if we liberate each other. Really framing this, as we always have from the beginning, that this isn't just about this pipeline. This is about creating another world that is possible, not to sound corny, but it's true. The aftereffects of this work, it's not just about fighting this pipeline, but it really is about building this community.

Blair: The pipelines will leave, a lot of these folks will not. That feels worth recognizing to me.

TFSR: Yeah, for sure. I think it's all really well put.

So, as you said, this is a part of a quilt of a bunch of different patches of resistance in different places and interlocking struggles. It sounds like at this point, a lot of the legal process around the FERCs (the Federal En-

cording (two weeks ago or something), many scientists observed the average surface air temperature on the planet had reached that notable 2° C mark higher than preindustrial averages or higher than what we had measured in the past. This has been viewed as a global marker for cascading impacts of climate change. So, you've got the point of extraction, the point of distribution, and then what happens when that carbon hits the atmosphere and interacts in all the different ways that it does at a wider and global level. I wonder if y'all would say a little bit about what's at stake and what sort of support the movement needs.

Mountain: Yeah, I think it's interesting, specifically with natural gas and how it's marketed as a clean burning fuel. Like you said, it really disregards the point of extraction, where so much gas, through this hydraulic fracking process, is released directly into the atmosphere. Gases like methane and other natural gases that go into this process, when they're burned, have less of a carbon footprint, but if they're just released into the air, have a tremendous... Methane or other gases that are found in these deposits can have a tenfold increase in carbon effects down the stream. So, they'll market this as, "Oh, this is a clean burning fuel," but they won't tell you about the point of extraction and then the point of distribution, all of carbon being burned by these machines to destroy the land. It's part of this greenwashing marketing, seeing natural gas as this transition fuel.

Going back to like Joe Manchin and to the debt ceiling bill, which really revitalized this project because this project was pretty much floundering as of a couple of years ago. It was beleaguered in the courts; it was having so many problems via construction and people resisting it. The debt ceiling bill with Joe Manchin really pushed it through with his interest in the in the extractive industry benefiting hugely from this. It's part of this campaign to really market this fuel as something good. Some of the stuff that was in the debt ceiling bill people will point to is like, "Oh, those are some good things, there's always a silver lining," but any of the good of that bill is completely negated by the process of extraction and of the interests that are involved.

So, I think this is part of a broader campaign to really pull the wool over people's eyes of how little these people care about the future and about any one of our lives. They just care about profit. I don't know. Blair, do you have anything?

Blair: Yeah, I think that a lot of folks that are in this fight are super passionate about the environment and about issues like halting global warming. But sometimes I also like to step away from that for a minute and touch on the fact that for a lot of people, the reason they're involved in this fight is because they see it as one symptom of the larger global network of terrible things that are ravaging our communities and our planet. For communities that have been impacted by this pipeline, we've also seen that where this disruptive industry goes, we see things like increased police militarization, we see things like increased state surveillance, we see how it further marginalizes queer, trans, Black, brown, and indigenous community members. So,

Growing up in central Appalachia, extractive industry has always been here, and the land itself has always resisted them. These mountains are not a hospitable place to try and bury a lot of infrastructure because they're some of the oldest mountains on Earth. They move constantly. They're very much alive and in my opinion very much resisting just like the people that love them are.

TFSR: I know that the MVP project has claimed that the majority, like 92% or something, some large percentage of their pipeline has already been in place since 2021 or 2022. That's grading, that's destruction of land, that's supposed to be shoring up parts of the pipeline route. A lot of it has not been the waterways. But, with that hydrostatic test failure and with what we know about the environmental impacts on the pipeline itself in its unfinished state, does that mean that of the 303 overall miles for the main part of the project that huge parts of that pipeline would need to go back and replace them, spend a bunch of money on labor hours, and then also new materials to relay that pipe over the already destroyed land in order to make it less likely to explode?

Mountain: Yeah, they touted this 90-95 percentage completed number. But like you said, a lot of that doesn't include the waterways. It doesn't include some of the steepest mountain crossings, like at Peters Mountain, across the Appalachian Trail where they're currently working. One of the actions that happened in in mid-October where someone locked themselves to a piece of construction equipment on top of Peters Mountain, so they're not done on top of Peters Mountain. They're not done on top of Poor Mountain, which Poor Mountain is extraordinarily steep. That's where a few people did sleeping dragons. One of the sleeping dragons that lasted for a couple of days. So, the person was up there for a couple of days because of the steepness of the terrain.

I think if they wanted to do this right—for the record, I don't think there is any way to do this—they would have to dig up all this pipe and replace it, which they're not going to do. They just want to cut as many corners as possible. Right now, it's unclear, for the hydrostatic test, what part failed and what was the reason for the failure, if it was because of corroded pipes, shoddy welds, or some other shifting landmass that caused a break or a fracture in the pipe. It's still unclear. That came out recently. I'm not sure, Blair, if you have any more information on that.

Blair: I'm not too terribly certain about the recent incident. It's hard to get that information because another thing that is seen all the time here is that MVP is very committed to not being transparent with local communities. So, when stuff happens, it's often very hard to get information about what's actually going on.

I think, to speak to if there was a right way to do this, part of the problem is that even if you do everything correct, as correct as it can be done, once that pipe is in the ground, you still have to deal with things like karst topography, which is a phenomenon in Central Appalachia, where there's a lot of ground movement and

a lot of cave systems and a lot of under underground limestone that makes it very difficult to keep infrastructure in place for a very long time. This affects construction projects in Central Appalachia that aren't even that ridiculously dangerous and related to extractive industry.

One of the high schools where I grew up literally had a sinkhole open up in the middle of the school cafeteria because the karst topography and the way that the ground moves here is just so unpredictable that, in order to build anything, you have to really be rigorous about the safety standards you're using. Then also just be aware that some things just aren't feasible. While obviously there should be no pipelines anywhere, particularly in Central Appalachia, pipelines like this one can really put communities at risk because even if all the welds are done correctly, and all the pressure testing is done correctly, and you grade the land the way that it should be, all it takes is for the mountains to have one bad day. Then you've got problems of massive proportions that put a lot of Appalachian folks at risk.

Mountain: There's a lot of hubris among the workers and the people constructing this pipeline. This is unsourced, but a local was talking to a worker, and the worker was like, "Yeah, that's fine. The mountains will just move around the pipe," as if the metal and the welds from the pipe are going to be stronger than the mountain. I think there's just an extraordinary amount of faith in this big technological project that people are really missing the basic facts of how infeasible this project is.

Blair: Yeah, I think to add to that, the folks, by and large, that are constructing and working on this pipeline are not Appalachians, and they don't have experience with Central Appalachia. So, it's hard not to laugh when a pipeline worker from Oklahoma is talking about how the mountains will just move around the pipe because they have no clue. The mountains are always going to win. That's just how it works. Unequivocally.

TFSR: I think a few times on the show, when I've had guests talking about the MVP, one of the experiences that a lot of the extractive industries often have are these "man camps" where it's a high concentration of out of town, mostly like cis-dudes, younger, coming in for high pay, dangerous jobs. That can have a lot of impacts on the local community.

For one thing, the money that gets made in the construction of however destructive the project is means the money doesn't stay there from those jobs anyway, no matter how much is promised in the meantime. But it also means that there's an ethical disconnection between the interests of the people doing the work, and who are there for a short period of time, who often will view the local surroundings as what's getting in their way of getting their job and their paycheck done quick. On Twitter, recently there have been some posts from folks along the proposed pipeline route that have said that there have been increased DUI arrests among the out-of-town pipeline workers in the small rural communities that they've invaded, as

of the other projects maybe that they're involved with that people might have heard of them from?

Blair: So as far as the holding of the pipeline, the largest stakeholder in the Mountain Valley Pipeline is the Equitrans Midstream Corporation, which holds a significant stake in Mountain Valley Pipeline. Then there's also a variety of smaller owners. The Roanoke Gas Company, for example, is one of the few actually Appalachian-based companies that hold stakes in the Mountain Valley Pipeline. Then they've collaborated with a variety of local law firms and litigation groups that are helping them pursue civil litigation.

One of the primary litigators for Mountain Valley Pipeline has been Wade Massie, who is an officer at PennStuart, which is a law firm based out of Abingdon, VA. Wade Massie in particular has a pretty long history of pursuing litigation on behalf of extractive industry in Appalachia. He has previously done a lot of work to try and help companies that were going through things like coal lease disputes and mineral rights issues, as well as like timber companies and coal companies, and now has just continued on and sold himself once again to Mountain Valley Pipeline to work on their behalf and pursue civil litigation against pipeline fighters for their work.

I think there are definitely a lot of threads that run underneath all of this litigation and criminal charges that go back maybe even as far as like the early 1900s in Appalachia. What is going on here, with a combination of civil litigation, criminal charges, collaborating with local attorneys and law enforcement, is a tradition of repression that has been boiled down to almost the finite science in this part of the country. We have seen throughout our history, the exact same thing happens in the coal fights, and in previous pipeline fights and in land defense matters, that have happened in these hills for a long time. So, while there is a really strong tradition of organizing, and community building and resisting here, I think that there's also a lot of repressive infrastructure that has been built up by previous civil and criminal disputes between Appalachian resisters and extractive industries. So, we're really seeing that come to fruition.

TFSR: So, I want to return to some of the reasons for resisting the MVP. These are at least three of the points of destruction that are easy to point out in this conversation. We've covered some of them already. But these could motivate people to stop this pipeline—and all pipelines. So, there's keeping the carbon in the ground in the communities in Ohio where the natural gas is being hydraulically fractured from. Secondly, there's that pathway that we've been talking about this whole time that's being disturbed in the waterway is being crossed and ongoing dangers of spills or explosions along this 303-mile pathway proposed, and the endpoints, the compression stations, all these things. Then finally, there's the wider environmental impacts.

Notably, in mid-November of 2023, just a little bit after we're re-

poverty and the lack of wealth in the region to go after folks with bull**** lawsuits that target them financially. And then they also attack people in the court system with charges that they know are illegitimate but are scary and are meant to scare and divide and create a sense of subjugation and of fear. For Appalachian communities that oftentimes don't have a lot of high-powered support like you might see in other places to resist things like legal intimidation. Also, in jurisdictions where there isn't necessarily a lot of police or prosecutorial oversight.

So, for example, the abduction felonies, currently, five folks are being charged with felony abduction, which is Virginia's kidnapping charge for an action that took place on Peter's Mountain. The state in conjunction with MVP is alleging that by allegedly halting a bulldozer protesters had essentially kidnapped the operator inside. It's a long tradition in Central Appalachia to utilize charges that are illegitimate and not rooted in fact or truth in order to try and bully local communities. I think that we have seen, time and time again, that when companies and law enforcement try and subjugate people, all it does is build a further sense of community resistance.

I would say Appalachian communities are many things, some good, some bad, but what they almost never are, are cowardly. They do not intimidate easy. They don't back down easy, and they're not easy to scare. So, I think that the companies that are doing this... I don't know why they're pursuing this strategy. I have faith in these communities, and I know that folks are going to keep resisting no matter what.

Mountain: Yeah, they've tried this civil injunction lawsuit before. Also, during the tree sits on Yellow Finch, they were trying to sue people. The long and short of that is, at the end of the day, it's just about intimidation. They might not actually think that they have the ability to get money out of people and try to sue people. They just want the intimidation factor.

With the tree sitters on Yellow Finch, they were also being sued for hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars. And currently they're seeking, I think, \$4.3 million through this latest injunction. It's just these big over overblown numbers for these civil cases, these big overblown charges, like the abduction felonies. There's abduction and then also a felony improper use of a vehicle, basically joyriding, and then a misdemeanor conspiracy charge, which I think it's conspiracy to defame a corporate entity or person. So, they're using these pretty outlandish charges just to try to intimidate people. But like Blair was saying it doesn't really work out in their favor, and I think they really severely underestimated how stubborn, like these mountains, we are.

TFSR: So, who are some of these companies that are taking part in various parts of the destruction and construction of the pipeline, some of the PR firms that are supporting them, some of the law firms that are pursuing activist and community members that we've been speaking about and the work that they've been doing? Can you name any of the companies or some

well as ramping up aggression from the same workers against activists and other locals.

I wonder if you could talk about this dynamic a little bit or share any anecdotes that are safe to share.

Mountain: Yeah, I mean, we definitely talked to a state police who said that the pipeline workers are kind of a cash cow for some of these local communities in terms of like DUI arrests. It is a weird dynamic, kind of what you bring up, of how the workers see the local communities and local topography as an impediment. In some ways we've been told by workers and by cops that if it wasn't for the people resisting this pipeline, they'd be out of the job, especially the security. I've been told straight up by a number of security people that they were like, "Yeah, if y'all hadn't been here protesting all these years, I'd be out of a job." Kind of low key thanking me. It is a weird dynamic. I think that the interest of the pipeline workers is definitely not in the interest of the local communities.

There's a weird parasitic relationship between these pipeline companies, and extractive industry in general, and local communities. They come in, and they do inject some capital into the local economy, be it through RV rental space for these man camps, or hotels, or restaurants, or DUI arrests, but those are all very fleeting. They don't actually go back to the communities that are here. Like the money that comes from DUI arrests just goes for more cops, just to harass more people. All of these sort of short term gains that people see in terms of the economy are just that. They are short term little aberrations, and once the workers go away all of any perceived benefit will go away. Then you'll be stuck with this massive, basically pipe bomb that will eventually go off.

Blair: I think that the local community members that are selling Blue Raspberry Bangs, Copenhagen Wintergreen Long Cut, and Elf Bars are probably doing really well for themselves right about now. I also suspect that I don't think that Copenhagen Wintergreen Long Cut and Elf Bar sales are going to uplift people of Appalachia for the sustainable long term, unfortunately. So, honestly, while pipeliners may frequent gas stations, they may rent RVs, there's nothing being done to develop the long-term economy here by this industry.

I am by no means a defender of the coal industry. I think it's atrocious. But I think when you talk to Appalachian people, you find that they're willing to give a lot more grace to coal companies because historically coal companies have provided local jobs that stay local. Also, Appalachian people have paid an enormous price historically to do things like coal mining. Some of my ancestors lost limbs in coal mines and coal mine collapses.

So, there is an element of Appalachian folks understanding of the sacrifices that people in extractive industry have to make and also deeply understanding the detriments. But when there is absolutely no benefit from an industry coming in, and they're not employing local people. In Appalachia, people have no part, for the most part, the actual industry, and are not making any long-term gains. It just

creates this very awkward tension and resentment between community members and pipeliners who see this space as a playground for them to come and build their pipeline and then hunt and fish on the weekends and talk about how they liked the mountains while simultaneously ravaging them for the people that have made their lives here and have to live here once they leave. It sucks. To be completely frank.

TFSR: You've mentioned the long term impacts on an individual level of some of your ancestors, for instance, who were severely injured by the ravages of the coal companies and the extraction industries. Besides the possibility of an exploding or leaking pipeline (even if they were to operate as advertised), can you talk a little bit about some of the environmental impacts of what having those huge cuts through the landscape do, what the changes to the terrain can do to water supplies, erosion, things like this? Is that something that there's any sort of promise been made by the people that are building the pipeline that that will get resolved?

Blair: That's a big question. I think that the impacts of the pipeline are twofold. You have the health impacts, of having a natural gas pipeline cut through your groundwater sources. We've already seen things like people who have depended on well water for generations having their wells dry up because they have been corrupted by pipelines. We've seen things like local streams being absolutely obliterated by sedimentation and runoff from pipeline construction sites. That's even without leakage of the potential natural gas or pipe bomb exploding and going off in people's backyard.

We also tend to have really bad rainstorms. When you make cuts in the land, that's when you see things like the floods in Kentucky and West Virginia that have become really notarized in recent years. When the coal companies came and did mountaintop removal, it caused an immense stream of floods to follow afterwards. A lot of Appalachian people died. I think that while MVP might be promising short term payouts right now, the question is are they going to stick around and take care of the health impacts that are going to follow generationally after they have left. I don't think that that is a likely thing to happen at all. I think that they're going to do what they always do, which is leave and leave the folks down here high and dry to deal with their consequences.

Water sources in Central Appalachia are the lifeblood of a lot of communities. In some places people don't have running water or very often are not connected to municipal water systems. So, our groundwater is what we have, and it's part of how we survive. I wrote about it in a statement recently that I was baptized in a creek, which is very common in Central Appalachia, for a lot of different spiritual traditions, to be baptized in natural bodies of water. The same creek where I was baptized was recently drilled under by MVP and now is facing the effects of that sedimentation and that construction.

I think it's hard to understate the pain and suffering that comes with a project like this. Not from just seeing the degradation on the land, but also from

the long-term health effects and also the spiritual and mental effects that seeing your home pillaged like this can do to a community.

Mountain: Yeah, and often, they'll make some big promises. So, you mentioned the cuts in the land, they'll say that like, "Oh, these are going to be great deer grazing areas," and they'll do these hydroseeding where they've tore up the land, graded, buried pipe, and then they'll throw some of these seed pods. They don't actually do much of anything. Maybe it looks pretty (it doesn't even really look pretty), but the grass grows for like a week and then it dies because there's no actual long-term thinking that goes through it. It's all it's all just visual, on surface level.

Blair: They also leave out that when they talk about re-seeding the land, that it is frequently done by massive seeders that are floating around hanging beneath helicopters. So, people that live near the route with his pipelines and just have to hear chopper rotors going for days on end. I've even heard stories from locals of their children being hit by flying seed pods that have been dropped from MVPs helicopters under the premise of re-seeding the land. So even the process of their supposed environmental restoration has some pretty strong negative effects for the community.

Mountain: To add in this: A lot of erosion and sediment control workers, a lot of the workers are very underpaid, a lot of them are migrant workers. So, you have this stratification of jobs being created with some of the lowest paid and hardest jobs going to Black and brown workers. And so, there's this class element to it as well.

TFSR: Yeah, that's a part of the discussion that I haven't heard mentioned before. I'm sure that it's native plants that are being re-seeded in there to support the existing ecosystem with more of what the environments around here and the biosphere is has learned to live with and alongside as well.

So as posted on the Appalachians Against Pipelines ex-Twitter/X account a few days ago, in response to months of weekly actions on worksites the "MVP is currently suing 35 individuals, and at least 20 pipeline fighters are facing criminal charges including BS Abduction Felonies." Could you talk a bit about what you know about these legal actions the weaponization of the legal system and threats of destitution being used by the MVP project to crush resistance by those attempting to save life in the mountains, maybe even a bit about what those abduction felonies that were quoted in there are?

Mountain: Yeah, that's a big question.

Blair: I think the legal situation here is changing every single day, and MVP in collaboration with local, state, and federal law enforcement has decided to hit folks with a two-pronged attack, where they take advantage of things like generational